

FIGHT KILLER COPS
AFTER FLOYD TRIAL

PROTESTS GROW AGAINST RACIST POLICE
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KILL THE BILL

REPORTS FROM THE RESISTANCE
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CAMERON



GREENSILL



SUNAK



HANCOCK



CORONAVIRUS

Hospitals in India
near collapse as
new wave hits

THE GRIM milestone of three million deaths worldwide from Covid-19 was reached this week.

Another 5.2 million people tested positive—more than in any week during the pandemic. India is in crisis after the state failed to prepare for the entirely predictable new wave.

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IT'S MORE THAN GREENSILL A SYSTEM OF SLEAZE

WHAT LIES BEHIND THE SCANDALS >>PAGES 3, 10&11

KELLY



PRIOR



CROTHERS



MANZONI



HOGAN HOWE



BRIERWOOD



GUPTA



PENROSE



STRIKES



**British Gas
workers let
down by union**

THOUSANDS OF workers have lost jobs and had conditions attacked at British Gas.

It was not inevitable.

Workers repeatedly showed their willingness to fight and struck for 43 days. But GMB union leaders made mistakes that failed to pile pressure on the bosses.

>>Page 17

FOOTBALL

European Super
League stitch-up
is all about profit

SIX LEADING English football teams are among 12 clubs that have joined a new European Super League.

It's motivated by profit after a year of clubs losing out on revenue due to the pandemic.

But football was handed to big business interests long ago.

>>Page 7



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'When historians retell the story of the pandemic, the image of the queen sitting alone, masked and in mourning, will surely rank among the most poignant'

The Guardian newspaper

'Didn't want a fuss'

What Prince Philip allegedly felt about his funeral

'The pared down nature of it was more in keeping with his character'

The BBC on the funeral

'Remarkable legacy'

Sir Keir Starmer on what Philip has left behind

'It is just what Philip would have wanted'

The Sun on 'news' that prince Charles met up with his kids

'We never saw so motley, so rude, so ill-managed a body of persons'

The Times, July 1830 on the behaviour of the congregation at George IV's funeral



The Duke is still dead! You'd better be sad, or else the queen gets it

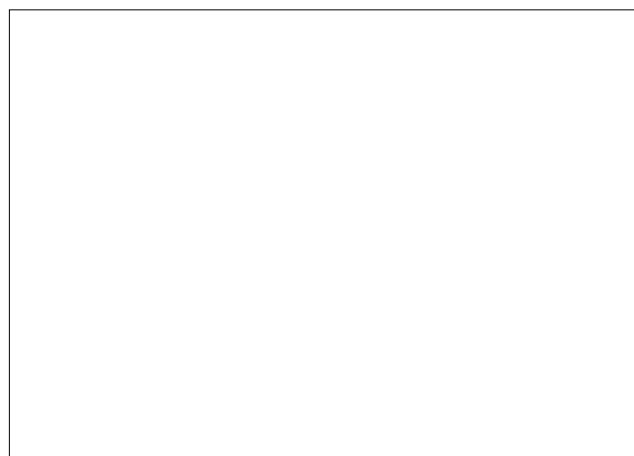
RACISTS ACROSS Britain, and the world, united in mourning last Saturday to remember Prince Philip. It was a fitting send off for the dead royal, who dedicated his entire life to being rich and racist.

The Duke's coffin was covered with his Personal Standard and carried on a purpose built Land Rover Defender.

Pallbearers of the Royal Marines carried the coffin into St George's Chapel.

It was followed by the Princess Royal, Prince of Wales, Duke of York, Earl of Wessex, Duke of Cambridge, Peter Phillips, Duke of Sussex, Earl of Snowdon and Vice Admiral Sir Timothy Laurence.

If, say, a terrorist had chosen that moment to strike, it could have had devastating



BYE! DEAD racist who was dead racist— still dead racist, now buried

consequences for the royals. A huge chunk of the parasites could have been taken out in one fell swoop. Alas it was not to be.

In breaking news, Prince Charles was visibly emotional

while the queen looked grief-stricken as she accompanied the coffin on its final journey. Prince William and Harry wore black.

They looked sombre.

Basically, everyone was

just very, very sad. After all, you don't expect 99 year olds to drop dead.

Especially ones who've had such a luxurious, pampered life as Philip.

But it seems all that "dedication to duty" and hard work doing public service type of things finally got the better of him.

Philip kept on working doing whatever it is Philip did until he was in his 90s. Did you know that? We'll keep saying it until you do.

Now that the racist has been laid to rest, we'll only have a few more months of coverage about him. Being dead doesn't stop you being newsworthy.

And when the queen dies, and we can do it all again!

Not that we want to see her majesty dead, of course. But it makes for easy copy.

VOLDEMORT, SORRY Meghan Markle, shunned prince Philip by refusing to attend the funeral.

The ingrate had some excuse about being seven months pregnant and advice from a "physician". Phil will be turning in his grave.

Then again, Meghan would have ruined the all-white funeral so maybe not! (We can say things like that because racism is really funny now because, you know, Philip).



Voldemort-Meghan Markle

IMPORTANTLY, THE number of people watching the funeral on TV topped the number who tuned in to watch Harry and Meghan's Oprah Winfrey interview.

Some 12.6 million tuned in on the BBC and ITV to watch the funeral at the peak of viewing.

Harry and Meghan's only drew a measly 12.4 million.

Queen takes over the helm, steers to calm

THE QUEEN was stoic as ever in the meticulous planning of the racist's funeral.

And she took problem after problem in her stride in her queenly way.

The paedophile prince Andrew had threatened to attend the funeral as an Admiral, despite having to defer his promotion to that rank on account of being a paedophile.

He'd already used Philip's death to try and worm his way back into working royal life.

On top of this, the poor queen was worrying about the friction between William and Harry. And there were real fears that the Duke of Sussex

could have been the only senior royal not in military dress for the funeral.

But the queen showed her majesty by calmly taking it all in her stride, as she always does.

She ordered everyone to dress in the same black outfits, to save Harry the shame of not being in military dress.

And she organised where William and Harry would walk to try and ease the tension.

Others in the media have put it much better than Troublemaker ever could. The funeral showed the queen "acting as first mate to the recently departed captain of the ship".

Divisions and different rules if you're a royal

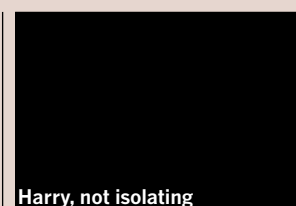
Troublemaker's sources say Harry has suffered from "a great deal of frostiness" from many royals.

One source said that the paedophile Prince Andrew is the only one who has been nice to him.

Apparently it's because Andrew knows how it feels to be an "outsider".

YOU DON'T have to follow coronavirus self-isolation rules if you're a racist grandfather to bury.

Harry flew into Britain from his LA home on Sunday. Arrivals from the US to Britain are



supposed to self-isolate for ten days on arrival.

But Harry had to pay his respects to the dead racist.

Apparently he will continue his self-isolation at fancy Frogmore Cottage "all other times". Except for a "walk" he had with his father, prince Charles, on Sunday.

Self-isolating is great when you're royal.

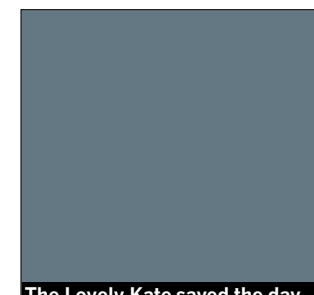
Wills and Harry bury the racist hatchet

IT WAS one of the most talked-about reconciliations for years. And to the nation's great relief and joy, it came off.

Early on the day of the funeral, William, 38, and Harry, 36, looked—as usual—like they hated each other. It was The Lovely Kate who came to the rescue, stepping in to make everything better like she always does.

Had The Lovely Kate not been there to talk to Harry when they filed out of the chapel, who knows what might have happened.

After the royals left the funeral service, William was ahead of Harry and



The Lovely Kate. The Lovely Kate was chatting to Harry (isn't she LOVELY?). Then William turned around to speak to The Lovely Kate. THEN Harry caught up with them and The Lovely Kate delicately stepped away, leaving the brothers alone so they could talk.

With bated breath, the nation watched as William and Harry CHATTED and seemed to be RELAXED with each other. It was the first time the pair had been seen in public together for more than a year!

They bravely put aside their differences so they could collectively mourn the racist Philip. That's dedication to duty for you.

Body language expert Italk Shyte told Troublemaker, "There was a connection between William and Harry as they left the chapel."

"They talked to each other and their bodies were quite close together. So that shows that they were quite close together, talking."

"It was not at all contrived for the cameras."

As Harry's media mate Tom Bradby said, "Funerals are a time of reconciliation and that's a sight, let's be honest, that many wanted to see. Not least the family itself."

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Newsdesk 020 7840 5656
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Write to Socialist Worker
PO Box 74955
London E16 9EJ

Greensill scandal is still shaking establishment

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE GREENSILL Capital scandal continues to ensnare top members of the establishment.

The financing firm collapsed last month after investors Credit Suisse froze key financing amid panic over the firm's dodgy debts.

Former Tory prime minister David Cameron had repeatedly lobbied the government on behalf of Greensill. Now Tory peer Lord Prior, who chairs NHS England, faces questions over his links to Greensill.

Prior, a health minister in Cameron's government, helped Greensill Capital lobby senior health service bosses to promote its plan for an NHS payment scheme.

The scheme would let NHS workers in England be paid daily instead of monthly via an app called Earnd. Prior arranged for Greensill and Bill Crothers, former head of government procurement, to meet Julian Kelly in July 2019.

Kelly is NHS England's chief financial officer. NHS boss Sir Simon Stevens also attended at Prior's request.

Financing

Former Labour prime minister and warmonger Tony Blair has become embroiled in the scandal too.

Blair met the firm's founder, Lex Greensill, on three separate occasions last year, first at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January.

Blair is on a committee that has directed a £25 billion relocation of Indonesia's capital city to Borneo from Jakarta. Greensill Capital held talks last year on financing the relocation.

Also on the committee is billionaire founder of SoftBank Masayoshi Son. SoftBank invested vast sums of cash in Greensill Capital.

During a February meeting involving the three, Son gestured to Greensill and said, "He's the money

man!" Blair pointed to Greensill and appeared to say, "He's really poor!"

Cameron now faces three separate inquiries. Various Tories vented their rage about the scandal in a debate in parliament last week.

Chair of the Commons public administration and constitutional affairs committee William Wragg said the lobbying had been "tasteless, slapdash and unbecoming".

They are furious that the scandal is shining too strong a light on the networks of super-rich bankers and bosses that shape government policy.

Cameron wasn't isolated in his backing for the Greensill payment plan. Tory health secretary Matt Hancock backed it. And chancellor Rishi Sunak agreed to intervene to help Greensill grab public money from coronavirus loan schemes.

The Times newspaper said the scandal is "about politicians trying to subvert normal processes by using their influence and the old pals' act".

"It is not the British way, and it stinks," it said. But it is the British way—and it stinks.

Tony Blair met Greensill three times

Socialist Worker

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- Send 'start' to the number

Cameron lobbied for app

DAVID CAMERON used the coronavirus pandemic to make his case for Greensill Capital.

Cameron emailed Matthew Gould, head of the NHSX digital arm of the NHS, on 23 April last year. He said that the Earnd app would contribute "to the priority of doing all we can to help NHS employees at the current time".

But it would be so "much slicker if it can obtain access to employee data in ESR" the Electronic Staff Record.

"Once this is all over, it would be great to see you again—maybe for lunch?" Cameron went on to write, "Let's stay in touch!"

Earnd later entered a contract with ESR and signed a deal to

roll the app out to "all" NHS organisations. This gave Earnd access to the records of as many as 400,000 people. But just 450 people signed up.

The Earnd app has now gone into administration owing at least £400,000 to NHS-affiliated groups.

Pimlico Academy in London

Anti-racist pupils face punishment

SCHOOL STUDENTS who organised a protest over racism at Pimlico academy could face permanent exclusion from school.

The protest at the central London school in March saw hundreds of students refuse to go into classes.

Students said a new uniform policy, which banned certain hairstyles and "colourful" hijabs, was racist.

One student described to Socialist Worker at the time that the school had, "kind of shut our voices down."

"I wouldn't say the head teacher is racist. But we asked him to take down a union jack flag several times, and he ignored us."

Now some students instructed to attend disciplinary meetings on Monday of this week, the first day of term after the Easter break.

Disruptive

An email from head teacher Daniel Smith to some parents said this was due to "disruptive behaviour on the last day of term".

"If (child) is found to have committed a serious breach of the academy's behaviour policy and if it is deemed that (child) remaining in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of others, consideration will be given to permanently excluding (child) from the academy," it said.

It's a disgraceful attempt to bully students who took a stand over racism—and were supported by many parents and school workers in doing so.

Lord Nash, chair of the Future Academies chain that runs the school, has also threatened that students could face disciplinary action.

If any students are victimised, other students, campaigners, school workers and trade unionists must defend them.

On other pages...
Greensill—corruption at the heart of the system >>Pages 10&11



Thousands take to the streets over police bill

Protests link anger at racism, sexism and attacks on the right to protest, say Isabel Ringrose and Sam Ord

OVER 1,000 people took to the streets of London last Saturday as part of the second Kill The Bill day of action.

It was one of over 35 protests that took place across Britain on the same day.

In the capital, protesters marched from Wellington Arch to Parliament Square to demand the Tories scrap the new police bill.

It will grant the police more repressive powers, restrict the right to protest and clamp down on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.

School students Sam and Charlotte said they joined the protest “because if we don’t come out now, we might never be able to again”.

“I’ve never been on a protest before,” Sam told Socialist Worker.

“But now I’m out because they’re limiting our human rights.”

Linked

Marchers linked the fight against the police bill to fights against racism, chanting, “All your racist, sexist cops we don’t need them.”

Another protester told Socialist Worker, “We’re here to protect the right to protest.”

“This is the first sign of the state taking our power away.”

Protesters were angry that the new law will provide longer prison

BACK STORY

A new Tory police bill will help cops to clamp down on protest

● The bill will make life even harder for Roma, Travellers and Gypsies

● Police will be handed more repressive powers which means more harassment on the streets

● More than 40 protests against the bill took place across Britain last Saturday

● The movement now needs to grow—and everyone should join protests planned for 1 May

sentences for tearing statues down than for violence against women.

“It’s outrageous,” one told Socialist Worker. “They pretend to protect women, yet the process for reporting assault is so shaming for women.”

The protest coincided with Prince Philip’s funeral.

Many protesters said they wouldn’t take the official minute’s silence for the dead racist.

“He’s a colonialist, that’s literally what he represented,” one protester told Socialist Worker.

“I don’t know why so many are showing him respect.”



MARCHERS IN London on Saturday

Rather than take a mournful minute’s silence at 3pm like the establishment wanted, protesters held a ten minute silence for victims of police brutality.

Sam added that he doesn’t “really care that Philip is dead”. “They live off our money,” he said.

The bill comes after Tory home secretary Priti Patel looked for ways to crack down on protest in the wake of Extinction Rebellion’s (XR) rebellions in London.

Josh from XR said, “The policing bill is an attack on direct action, especially the tactics used by XR.”

“While there is a climate crisis,

we need to mobilise quickly and can’t afford to be stopped by the bill.”

It’s vital the street movement stays radical and united in the fight against the Tory bill. Fran, who is part of the NEU education union, said, “Does anyone think we can trust the government after the last year?”

“They handed millions of pounds worth of contracts over to their mates.

“What they’re trying to do is eliminate opposition and the trade unions need to be fighting this tooth and nail.”

Saturday’s Kill the Bill protests which swept across Britain showed real rage and opposition to the Tories.

The united movement must continue to mobilise and build protests. Now 1 May needs to see bigger protests and more organised workers’ involvement.

Only a huge, militant push from below, including from the trade union movement, will kill the bill.

On other pages...

Greenhill—corruption at the heart of the system >>> **Pages 10&11**

Why trade unionists should oppose the police crime bill

● John Hendy QC, trade union lawyer ● Kevin Courtney, NEU joint gen sec ● Jane Loftus, Communication Workers Union Vice-President ● Wilf Sullivan, Trade Union Congress race equality office ● Karen Reissmann, NHS nurse fined for protesting and Unison NEC (pc) ● More tbc

5.30pm Thursday 23 April
bit.ly/TUPoliceBill

No to an authoritarian state

IN Glasgow, around 100 protesters showed their solidarity.

That’s despite the fact that Scotland is not directly affected by the bill.

Protester Ross told Socialist Worker, “We had a united movement in full effect, with speakers from Extinction Rebellion, Stand Up To Racism and various trade unions.”



Message from the streets

Speakers from the pro-independence group, All Under

One Banner said, “We need to set a precedent that the racist British state must be broken if the bill is passed.”

Ross added, “No one in Scotland wants to see us mudslide into an authoritarian state.”

In Wales dozens mobilised in Cardiff, 100 in Haverfordwest and 200 marched in Aberystwyth.



Anti-racists on the march

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN



PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

‘We’ve got to make this bigger now’

IN NEWCASTLE, 200 people rallied at Grey’s Monument, then marched up the main shopping street.

The demonstration, organised by Resist NCL, called for a “mass public nuisance,” with “drums, whistles, megaphones, pots, pans and anything else you can make noise with.”

It was in reaction to measures in the bill that criminalise protests for causing a “nuisance.” The protest included drummers from Extinction Rebellion and a loud band.

Protester Katie told Socialist Worker, “With everything happening it feels like life is about to get worse and that the government is trying to pre-empt serious unrest with this bill.”

“It’s good that we’re still having protests. We have to keep going.

Angry

“There have been so many things in the news that make you angry, and we can’t just forget about them.”

She added, “The focus in the news on prince Philip just made me furious—how many other people have died?”

“It’s the sign of an authoritarian state that they put some people on a pedestal because they’re supposed to be more important.”

At the end of the rally, activist, Raj told protesters, “We’ve got a day of action on 1 May.

“We’ve got to make this bigger and bigger—we can’t lose momentum now.”

Dozens of demos show a broad, united fightback

UP TO 1,000 people marched through Bristol’s streets chanting, “Tory scum!”

Up to 600 people joined the protest in Sheffield. Protesters marched to the police station and blocked major junctions.

Around 150 protested in Manchester, including trade unionists and environmental and anti-racist groups.

Protester Abbie told Socialist Worker, “We won’t stop protesting until we can guarantee all attacks on the freedom to protest will stop.”

In Brighton up to 500 filled The Level then marched and blocked roads. Unison and UCU union activists joined the action.

In Dorchester over 100 marched carrying Black Lives Matter placards. They were joined by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller organisation, Kushti Bok. Some 200 protested in Oxford. Around 150 gathered in Birmingham, 100 in Bournemouth and York, and 50 in Luton. At its height, 120 people joined in Coventry. They



Protesters in Coventry

took the knee in solidarity with victims of police brutality.

There were about 150 on the Plymouth demonstration.

Nearly 100 people protested in Portsmouth. Many other towns and cities such as Southampton, Taunton, Bath and Ipswich hosted lively demonstrations.

Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

WHO SHOULD SOCIALISTS VOTE FOR ON 6 MAY?

LABOUT LEADER Keir Starmer’s tangle with someone in a pub this week emerged as a highlight of the campaign for the 6 May elections in England.

That’s because the rest of the campaign has been so uninspiring.

For revolutionaries, although elections matter, the battle on the streets and in the workplaces is always more important.

Building the movements over the police bill, climate change and racism, and encouraging more strikes are all more crucial than the 6 May vote. That’s particularly true as Starmer has relentlessly driven Labour rightwards.

Labour has no policies to challenge the rich or a deadly system that has failed so clearly and completely during coronavirus.

Nevertheless in most places socialists will have to vote Labour.

We want to see the Tories lose. If Boris Johnson and his coterie emerge with smiles on their faces after these elections, it will depress many activists. It will encourage the idea that the Tories can escape from any disaster.

More fundamentally, Labour is still not the same as the Tories. It retains some withered

connections with working class organisation through its links with the trade union leaders.

The exception is where a small number of credible socialist candidates are standing. For example, in the Liverpool mayor election Roger Bannister of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition has consistently won respectable votes.

He is confronting’s Labour’s capitulation to the Tories in the city.

The choice would have been wider if Labour lefts such as Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell had reacted to Starmer’s assaults by creating a new party. But they remain trapped in the iron cage of Labour. They remain in a party that

won’t even let its former leader be a Labour MP, and which this week suspended a councillor for calling prince Philip a “massive racist”.

In Scotland we can’t call for a Labour vote. Here a central issue before voters is whether the Scottish parliament will have a majority for an independence referendum—and Labour remains staunchly unionist.

At the same time many pro-independence forces, in the Scottish National Party and Alba, are completely unacceptable because of their pro-capitalist and bigoted politics. So in Scotland we say vote left and fight for independence.

The poverty of choice at the ballot box reflects a deeper crisis of the left.

Over three million people have died because of the ruling class handling of the pandemic. Hundreds of millions, particularly in the poorest countries, face being abandoned without vaccines, or hurled into poverty by lost jobs and slashed wages.

But socialist forces have not yet emerged on a mass scale to challenge the system.

Filling that gap through struggle and socialist politics is far more important than any vote.

“
The poverty of choice at the ballot box reflects a deeper crisis of the left

MILLIONS FACE JOBS CRISIS

NEARLY 500,000 young workers have lost their jobs since January 2020, latest Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures show. Young workers account for 60 percent of all jobs lost.

Some 1.67 million people were officially unemployed between December and February—311,000 more than a year ago.

There are 813,000 fewer workers on payrolls compared to a year ago. And this rose by 56,000 in March—the first rise

since December. Still, some found reason to celebrate.

The Times newspaper reported, “Britain’s job market continued to perform better than expected during lockdown. Vacancy rates jumped, redundancies fell and unemployment dropped.”

The ONS showed that employment fell by 73,000 to 32.4 million in the three months to February. In truth, unemployment is higher than the headlines suggest.

The number of “inactive” workers rose by 80,000 to 8.67

million. They are not looking for work, but will be when restrictions ease. And five million people remain furloughed, facing uncertain futures.

The Resolution Foundation think tank said that, when furloughed and inactive workers are accounted for, there is a “Covid employment gap” of 6.2 million.

The figures are an indictment of a system that puts profit before people. But they also shame the union leaders who have failed to lead resistance to the Tories.

Breakfast in



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ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Biden's economic shift boosts bosses

JOE BIDEN, a veteran Democratic Party politician, was generally seen as the continuity candidate when he ran successfully for the presidency of the United States. "Continuity" here means with the previous Democratic administrations of Bill Clinton and Barack Obama.

They used Washington's muscle to promote neoliberalism globally and to maintain US hegemony. And certainly Biden's cabinet is packed full of veterans of these administrations, including many hawks who thought Obama was too reluctant to take military action. Biden is indeed pursuing business as usual in, for example, slapping more sanctions on Russia. But he is also deviating from the Clinton-Obama template.

Most obviously, he has announced he will pull US troops out of Afghanistan before the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Resistance from the Pentagon stopped Obama or indeed Donald Trump from taking this step.

But the most significant shift is in economic strategy. Biden has followed up his \$1.9 trillion "American Rescue Plan"—extra spending financed by borrowing—by announcing a \$2 trillion "American Jobs Plan."

One commentator tweeted, "The era of 'the era of big government is over' is over", 40 years after Ronald Reagan opened it. In an interview with the New York Times, Brian Deese, director of Biden's National Economic Council, outlined three changes since Obama took office that led to this shift.

The first is climate change, which is driving the infrastructure programme.

Secondly, Deese says, "Our economy is becoming more unequal." This is interesting because neither Clinton nor Obama gave the impression of caring much about neoliberal policies widening inequality. This shift probably partly reflects the impact of Bernie Sanders, left-wing Congresswomen such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and their young supporters in pulling Democrats such as Biden leftwards.

But it is also a response to the polarisation of US society under Trump. Biden says, "The plan prioritises addressing long-standing and persistent racial injustice. The plan targets 40 percent of the benefits of climate and clean infrastructure investments to disadvantaged communities."

Competitors

Thirdly, according to Deese, "China is in a very different place than it was a decade ago. We are in a different place vis-à-vis our international competitors.

"And my openness to more targeted efforts to try to build domestic industrial-strength ... has increased, because I think we are not operating on a level playing field.

"There's not a market-based solution to try to address some of the big weaknesses that we're seeing open up in our economy when we're dealing with competitors like China that are not operating on market-based terms."

This makes it clear that Biden aims to use state intervention to revamp US imperialism in the face of China, which Deese calls "the ascendant economic and military power in the world". Biden says the infrastructure plan "will unify and mobilise the country to meet the great challenges of our time, the climate crisis and the ambitions of an autocratic China."

But Trump clashed with the US's most important ally, the European Union. One major issue has been European proposals to impose digital taxes on the giant US IT corporations, the so-called FAANGs (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google).

Trump defended them, as had Obama before him because the FAANGs are the most profitable sector of US capitalism. But they are also blatant and massive tax avoiders.

Biden has now proposed an international agreement on a uniform 21 percent global corporation tax. This would reduce the drain of US corporate profits to tax havens such as southern Ireland and thus generate the revenue needed to finance the infrastructure programme.

However it may also reduce European pressure for digital taxes, and therefore make it easier for Washington to bridge together Western capitalism against Chinese competition.

It's a very open question whether any of this will work.

The economic historian Adam Tooze, who has been exploring the ideological shift in Washington, thinks the eight-year infrastructure plan is too modest to have the necessary impact. But it looks as if we may have underestimated Biden's ambition.

RALLYING FOR justice

Grenfell inquiry hears from residents who raised alarm

by ISABEL RINGROSE

PEOPLE LIVING in Grenfell Tower were labelled "rebel residents" for raising safety concerns before the 2017 fire that killed 72 people.

The inquiry into the fire resumed this week with testimony from the bereaved, survivors and residents.

"We wanted to have a safe place to live," said David Collins, a resident from 2014 to 2016 who chaired the Grenfell Tower Residents' Group (GTRG).

"We weren't met in that desire. We never felt like we were met in our desire to have a safe tower."

Evidence was being given about how the building's landlord, Kensington and Chelsea Council, and the tenant management organisation who ran the tower (TMO), dealt with concerns.

The GTRG compiled complaints and attempted to raise them with the TMO and Rydon, who were responsible for the tower's refurbishment that was completed in 2016.

Disregard

Collins said there was a "total disregard for tenant and leaseholder well-being," by TMO and Rydon.

He explained that residents had concerns about the refurbishment and building work in general—including the consultation process, safety,

noise, quality, electric outage shortages, pipework and boilers. He said residents "wanted to be engaged in a group, not to be separated," adding, "we didn't feel individually we were being listened to."

He added that individual residents were given "subtle threats" and said that raising complaints alone was hard "if you don't have confidence or your mental health isn't stable."

Residents were forced to turn to local councillors and their MP. "No one else would listen to us," Collins explained.



David Collins at the inquiry

'If we cannot get out, people will die'

THE INQUIRY also heard from Lee Chapman, the secretary of Grenfell Leaseholders' Association.

The association raised concerns in 2017 regarding gas mains installation in the evacuation staircase.

Gas pipes were drilled through walls "in the cheapest possible way." Residents warned RBKC, "If we cannot get out people will die."

Chapman told the inquiry it was "a life and

death issue" that "just wasn't being dealt with".

He explained that responses were "totally uninformative and generic" and there was "an us and them" relationship between the landlord and residents.

Chapman also spoke about badly installed windows and extractor fans.

Wind travelled through gaps in the new windows, which had been "shoved on quickly".

"We tried every way we could possibly find to have a voice."

The inquiry was shown an email from TMO project manager Claire Williams about a discussion with chief executive Robert Black.

"We discussed the fact that the preference was not to meet up with the Grenfell Community Unite group which could be a showcase for Mr Daffarn," it read.

Edward Daffarn was another leading group member, who was set to give evidence later this week.

Blame

With his head in his hands, Collins asked, "How can you not listen to a tower block and blame someone for the problem because you can't do your jobs? It's a disgrace."

Eventually, residents secured a meeting with Rydon and TMO.

But Collins claimed a Rydon supervisor told them "We should be grateful for what we had rather than grumbling about problems".

TMO and Rydon's complaints procedures were "time consuming and tedious". Collins added, "They didn't care about our concerns, they didn't meet until forced to."

"There wasn't oversight or accountability," Collins said about TMO and RBKC's role in overseeing it.

The inquiry continues with evidence and accounts from more residents.

Scottish election—real battle will be on the streets

by HECTOR SIERRA and BOB FOTHERINGHAM

FORMER SCOTTISH first minister Alex Salmond's Alba Party Now has been plunged into a succession of scandals.

Former boxing champion Alex Arthur was one of the first Alba candidates to be announced. Immediately, it emerged that he had tweeted disgusting racist messages about Roma and Romanian “beggars” as well as messages stigmatising Aids patients.

And Alba's recent women's conference produced a statement that echoes transphobic tropes about trans rights being a threat to women's rights.

Worse still, at the conference Alba candidate for Central Scotland Margaret Lynch gave voice to nasty homophobic slurs. She wrongly accused charities Stonewall Scotland and LGBT Youth Scotland of campaigning to lower the age of consent.

Alba had some initial success with a flow of Scottish National Party (SNP) politicians—and even left wingers—joining.

These scandals should raise serious questions to people joining Alba out of frustration at the SNP's timid approach to winning independence.

People should reject the reactionary views of Alba candidates at the ballot box.

Attacking

Some of those attacking Alba present the SNP as a more palatable option for voters who back independence.

The SNP's manifesto, unveiled last week, will further strengthen for some its reputation as a left of centre social democratic party.

Headline promises include increased NHS funding by 20 percent, the creation of a National Care Service and the delivery of 100,000 affordable homes—by 2032. There was also a commitment to decarbonise the heating in a million homes—by 2030—and to bring Scotrail into public ownership.

MORE ONLINE

● **Scottish election campaign shows key battles are in the streets**
bit.ly/Scotland-election-streets

● **Scottish National Party manifesto pledges fail to deliver for working class people**
bit.ly/SNP-fails-working-class

Yet the Institute for Fiscal Studies calculates that the SNP's proposals will lead to “a real-time increase of around 2.1 percent per year”. This is less than the 3.4 percent Tories are promising in England.

There is also a serious question mark on how this will all be paid for. The SNP is pledging to freeze tax rates and bands. Without taxing the rich, the promises are either not a serious commitment, or will lead to cuts in funding for local councils.

It matters that there is a big vote for independence on 6 May and that left wing candidates, where they're standing, win.

Fight

Socialist Worker says, “Vote left—fight for independence” in the Scottish parliamentary elections.

But the lack of real alternatives to the SNP and Alba show the streets will be decisive to shift the political situation.

Campaign group Now Scotland has called a day of action on 1 May and All Under One Banner has organised a rally in Glasgow on the same day. These will be crucial to reenergise independence supporters after a year of splits and paralysis.

Challenging the British state will require much more.

It means the independence movement needs to support wider struggles. These include the college lecturers' strikes, NHS workers protesting against the SNP's 4 percent pay offer and the mobilisations around the Cop26 climate talks in Glasgow in November.

Sports industry

EMPTY STADIUMS mean bosses' profits have taken a hit

European Super League stitch-up shows football run for profit, not fans

SIX LEADING English football teams are among 12 clubs that have agreed to join a new European Super League (ESL).

The move is motivated by profit following a year of lockdown restrictions that have strangled some of the club's income.

The world's 20 richest football clubs are on course to miss out on almost £2 billion in revenue by the end of this season because of the pandemic.

Empty stadiums mean they haven't raked in ticket sales, and some clubs have had to pay back broadcast rights fees for games that were cancelled.

Another three clubs from Europe are also expected to join the league.

Fury

The announcement was greeted with fury by many fans raging at the corporate interests and super-rich club owners.

But football was handed to big business interests at the expense of fans a long time ago. That sell-out makes the ESL League shift possible.

Arsenal fan Dave told Socialist Worker, “I'm so angry to hear that

club owners are sitting down with others to plan the Super League.

“Principles are squashed in the pursuit of business culture which stole the game from the working class.”

Liverpool fan Heather told Socialist Worker, “Liverpool constantly appropriate the idea that we're the ‘workers' club’. This is despite the fact we're owned by multi-billionaire company, Fenway Sports Group.”

The new venture is financed by investment banking company JP Morgan, which has provided roughly £4.3 billion in debt

finance. The Premier League denounced the move.

But that's rich coming from an organisation that's in hock to mega-business interests.

Uefa, European football's governing body, also attacked the ESL plan. But that's because Uefa has its own scheme.

Uefa's annual conference on Monday was set to approve radical changes in the format of its competition. These were to include 100 more matches each season and more money-spinning ties between top teams.

Bargaining

The ESL may turn out to be a bargaining chip to influence the eventual outcome.

Club owners are also worried about forthcoming TV deals. There have been big reductions in the value of TV contracts in Italy and France this year. The Premier League will start the auction for its 2022-2025 broadcasting rights later this year.

Football clubs' relationship with big business and capitalism means that all key decisions are motivated by profit—not what the fans want.

Sam Ord

Fans only used for profit

Hospitals in India near collapse as new wave hits and cases rise

As world Covid-19 deaths pass three million, India is in the grip of a terrible new wave of the virus. Other countries governed by the hard right face a similar situation, says Yuri Prasad

THE GRIM milestone of three million deaths worldwide from Covid-19 was reached this week. It should be a sharp rebuke to those who insist the pandemic is waning.

Across the world another 5.2 million people tested positive.

This means more people were diagnosed with coronavirus in the last seven days than in any week since the start of the pandemic

India is one of the hardest hit countries. It now stands on the brink of catastrophe with a new strain of the virus spreading quickly and leaving hospitals completely overwhelmed.

In the capital New Delhi over 25,500 cases were confirmed in a 24-hour period, but there are fewer than 100 critical care beds available in the city of more than 20 million people.

Queues of desperately sick people form outside hospitals, while patients languish in ambulances and on corridor floors.

Now many hospitals have run out of oxygen and cylinders are running scarce.

Only when the crisis reached these terrible proportions did the government announce a new lockdown in the capital.

But in a country where millions of workers live a hand to mouth existence, and where there is no social security system, lockdown will lead to huge exodus. The virus will then spread from the city to the rural areas.

Appeal

The chief minister of Delhi begged people not to leave, saying, "I know when lockdowns are announced, daily-wage workers suffer and lose their jobs."

"But I appeal to them to not leave Delhi, it's a short lockdown and we will take care of you."

But the idea of India's hard right BJP government "taking care" of the poorest is laughable.

Throughout India's summer months prime minister Narendra Modi did nothing to prepare the country for the entirely predictable second wave.

No new hospitals were built or laboratories for sequencing the virus and identifying new strains, and no new social support systems were announced.

Instead thousands were crammed into international cricket tournaments, in stadiums quickly renamed after the "great leader".

State-wide election rallies brought thousands together without social distancing measures.

MANY HOSPITALS in India are running out of oxygen to treat patients suffering from Covid-19

Modi addressed one in West Bengal last week saying, "I can see a sea of masses. I haven't seen a rally like this."

And, at the BJP's request, a Hindu festival that brings tens of thousands of devotees to the River Ganges was allowed to go ahead.

This relaxed approach, combined with a stalling vaccination programme, has been an excellent breeding ground for new variants of the virus.

More than half of cases in the western state of Maharashtra

were of the new B.1.617 strain—described as the "double mutant".

Now that strain is likely to be in the capital too.

Pandora

"I believe we are seeing a stronger mutation," said Dr Pankaj Solanki, the medical director at the Dharamveer Solanki hospital in Delhi. "The Pandora's Box of this disaster is open now."

"People's condition is deteriorating much quicker, we're

seeing many more patients with a cytokine storm [a severe reaction from the immune system] and a lot of younger patients. Their symptoms are a lot more difficult to manage this time."

In Brazil, as in India, a hard right government has facilitated the growth of the virus by prioritising bosses' demands to keep production going instead of saving lives.

Hospitals in Rio de Janeiro report they are now so desperate for basic sedatives that they have resorted to tying patients to beds

to ventilate them without sedation.

But denying the lethality of Covid-19 and refusing to take appropriate measures is hardly the preserve of those two countries.

That was exactly the course that Boris Johnson's government set itself on as the pandemic first gripped Britain last year.

Narendra Modi allowed virus to spread

Dangerous virus variants spread across Britain

WHILE NEWSPAPERS rejoiced at last week's reopening of pubs in Britain, coronavirus strains first identified in South Africa and India were taking hold.

Together they pose a risk of infecting people—vaccinated or not.

Health officials suspect a sharp increase in infections in parts of south London are in part the result of the South African variant.

Some 23 cases involving the variant were detected in one

care home among 13 staff and ten residents.

Other clusters were found in two primary schools.

More than 70 cases of the Indian variant have also been found in England and Scotland, with some not involving travel to the subcontinent.

Scientists are urgently trying to find out more about the new Indian strain, and whether it will make Covid-19 deadlier and easier to pass on.

But it is already clear that the

Johnson opened pubs despite dangers

South African strain is a real danger.

Dr Hopkins, the chief medical advisor to NHS Test and Trace, said existing vaccines were "not as good against the South African variant as they are against our own [variant] B117 at preventing infection and transmission".

Despite the apparent threats, the government is yet to announce any new health measures in the areas most affected—except for increased testing.

Don't trust Tories on trans rights

MINISTERS recently announced that the charge placed on transgender people to legally change their gender has been lowered from £140 to £5.

This follows the promise of Tory equalities minister Liz Truss that the medical services facilitating transgender healthcare would be "kinder and more straightforward".

However we must not forget that this reform is little more than posturing, allowing the Tories to pretend that they care for LGBT+ rights.

This change does nothing to address terrible waiting lists of gender identity clinics, which for many are longer than three years.

And it's at odds with the increasing number of transgender people who have given up on NHS provided care. This is because of the invasive questioning of clinicians and outrageous waiting times.

The latest move is at worse an attempt to cover up their ruthless attacks on transgender people.

And at best it goes to show how little they care for us by choosing to reform, but not scrap.

The Tories also decided to disband their LGBT+ advisory board, following three members resigning over the creation of a "hostile environment" by the government for LGBT+ people.

LGBT+ rights will only be secured through socialist struggle, not hollow capitalist reforms.

Sky Golding
Liverpool



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

British Gas workers suffer at hands of selfish bosses

OVER THE last five years British Gas has dumped on employees from the highest height with countless business area closures, restructures, shift changes and wage freezes.

British Gas told us 18 months before offices in Canal Street, Leeds, would close that our futures were uncertain. We were told we would be moved to New Bridge House in Leeds.

However there were not enough positions for everyone, so voluntary redundancy was offered.

We had two weeks to decide whether we wanted it or not. Those who opted for redundancy received the call to say it had been accepted.

People bought cars and booked holidays. Then around four weeks later we had a briefing from the big cheese saying all redundancy offers were withdrawn and cancelled. We had to stay on.

Since then, British Gas has put us through three sets of shift changes and staff restructures. And it still leaves us hanging as to when or if we will be brought back into the office.

The new office has no parking, so people must use the park and ride or public transport to get there. This adds huge travel costs, on top of a wage freeze and benefits being cut.

The company has gone to the dogs. It treats staff like dirt. The

majority of us have given 15 plus years of service.

To be continually treated this way makes us realise we are nothing to them. I am baffled at how, with two active unions in place that we pay for to protect us, nothing has been done.

The stress, anxiety and depression this company has put on the majority of its employees without batting an eyelid is criminal.

Seeing all the engineers handing their vans and tools back to be fired last Wednesday because they refused to reduce their contract is also criminal.

British Gas worker
by email

Blame the system, not the shoppers

CASUALLY shaming people for shopping at Primark and other cheaper high street brands reeks of classism and elitism.

The pandemic has increased food bank dependency by more than 60 percent, so it's unfair to expect people to boycott these brands.

A lot of people rely on cheaper brands because they are being exploited by a system that doesn't care about the needs of working class people.

There are no ethically sourced or sustainable

brands that are affordable for people working for the pennies that the government classes as "living wage".

Rather than targeting consumers on where they choose to shop, given the limited choices working class people have, judgement should be aimed at the brands.

They pay low wages and provide poor working conditions for their employees. Working class people are not the enemy. Capitalism is.

Lake O'Hora
Northamptonshire

Ethnicity does determine job chances

RECENT REPORTS from the Office for National Statistics have found that over 40 percent of black people aged 16-24 are unemployed.

These numbers are like those found before the 1981 Brixton riots, where one of the main sparks was racial discrimination in employment.

In comparison, among the same age group Asian unemployment now sits at 24 percent while white unemployment around half that figure at 13 percent.

It has also been found that ethnic minorities are more likely to be working

Racism affects jobs

in less secure jobs, such as zero hours contracts or cash in hand work.

The handling of the pandemic has hit jobs hard, and all sections of the working class suffer. But

there is a clear racial disparity in who is more affected.

These numbers should not come as a surprise given the levels of institutional racism that exist in Britain.

While the recent government Sewell report has denied the existence of institutional racism, these numbers indicate the complete opposite.

Ethnic minorities are also more likely to be on the receiving end of police brutality, lower quality of education and lack of access to healthcare.

Harjeevan Gill
West London

Just a thought...

Send paedo prince back

HAS EVER a more odious, self serving, grotesque, lying reptile ever graced this country? A truly vile individual.

Stuart Turner
On Facebook

● ANY ATTEMPT by the establishment to rehabilitate this odious waste of space must be resisted.

Mark Haffenden
On Facebook

● THEY SHOULD have refused to televise him. I thought it was disgusting. Andrew is a vile piece of work and as yet an unconvicted paedophile. I think he will get away with it as he's hardly going to hop on a plane to stand trial.

Mary Patricia
On Facebook

Tax the rich

IT'S inconceivable that Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk are as rich as they are.

Their wealth increases while many others have lost their jobs due to Covid-19 and are now using food banks to survive. Time to tax billionaires, maybe?

Pippa van Leeuwen
On Twitter

Hartlepool's hospital hell

THE TORIES closed Hartlepool A&E in 2011, so those who need emergency care have to travel to about ten miles away. It's a big issue for people in the town.

Labour's candidate Paul Williams has made vague promises about "reviewing" and bringing services back to Hartlepool hospital.

In 2011, a lot of people didn't feel Labour's then-MP, Iain Wright, did much to help. Tony Blair's Labour government wanted to close our hospital too. Is it any wonder people don't trust Labour now?

Daniela Hall
Hartlepool

Kill the Bill

AS MANY people as possible need to be in force to support Kill the Bill. We cannot let the Tories win by taking away our protests and giving them to the police.

Katie Coles
Birmingham

The scandal of former prime ministers joining with top civil servants to lobby the government for private sector gains grows hotter by the day. **Sadie Robinson** gathers what we know so far, and concludes that the problem is deeply rooted in capitalism

IT DIDN'T take long for Lex Greensill to worm his way to the heart of the British government. A decade ago the Australian banker claimed to have found a way for bosses and states to get around the irritation that is paying their bills.

Companies want to wait as long as they can before paying suppliers—but those suppliers want to be paid as soon as possible.

Greensill founded Greensill Capital in London in 2011 to solve the problem. Jeremy Heywood, then Downing Street permanent secretary, invited him into Downing Street the same year.

Talk grew of using “supply chain finance” to pay pharmacies for providing NHS prescriptions—and much, much more.

By the end of the year, Heywood had given Greensill his own team and access to any department he wanted. The next year, Greensill was given a desk in the Cabinet Office. Heywood became cabinet secretary.

Senior civil servants, including the government's chief commercial officer and a Cabinet Office advisor, joined Greensill's senior staff.

And in October 2012, then Tory prime minister David Cameron announced the government was backing supply chain finance, including the Pharmacy Earlier Payment Scheme.

Cheap

Under this scheme, Greensill would pay the department of health's pharmacy bills for a cut—allegedly speeding up the process.

The scheme would see around 4,500 pharmacies get access to around £800 million in cheap finance. Cameron called it a “win-win, with large companies and small suppliers both benefiting from this innovative scheme”.

Cameron's move came despite widespread opposition from officials. And with government backing, Greensill's credibility rose, allowing it to expand.

Lex Greensill rapidly arrived at such a position of influence partly because of how politics works. It isn't simply



that there's a “revolving door” between politics and business. It's that the same people are involved in both, and so back each other up.

That's why Australia's former foreign minister Julie Bishop and David Cameron became highly paid Greensill advisers.

Jeremy Heywood met Greensill while working for the Morgan Stanley bank. Leaked emails from the Permanent Secretary to government officials in 2011 about supply chain finance show the cosy relationships that shape government policies.

“Lex and I have been working on this stuff on and off for five years,” said Heywood. “It is a huge frustration that HMG [Her Majesties' Government] continues to leave free money on the table in this way.”

Later Lex Greensill was awarded a CBE. And his links to the government and to pharmacy payment system boosted his credibility further—helping him expand and secure hundreds of millions of dollars in other investments.

The scandal also flows from neoliberal ideology. The Tories think private firms offer the most efficient way to run everything—whether that's paying pharmacies or NHS workers' wages.

So even when problems with Greensill emerged, top Tories continued to back it.

GREENSILL lobbied the government to allow it to set up a scheme to pay pharmacies for NHS prescriptions—and it used it's 'contacts' to do it.

LOBBYING

CORRUPTION and payments for access to politicians aren't an aberration to the “normal” running of the system—they are the normal running of the system.

A network of big businesses spend vast amounts of money lobbying politicians to act in their interests.

Lobbyists hold meetings and “briefings” with ministers and officials and also get together over drinks and lunches to “network”. They are tightly linked to ministers and officials. So politicians will sit on the boards of the firms that the lobbyist represents. They will move in the same circles and share acquaintances.

Lobbying is well organised corruption.

GREENSILL

CORRUPTION AT THE HEART OF THE SYSTEM



REGULATIONS

Toothless regulator can't stop lobbyists' greed

THE PROBLEM is the lobbying—but also the rules on lobbying.

The ministerial code and civil service business appointment rules recommend a two-year ban on lobbying after ministers and officials leave government.

This is why David Cameron didn't break any rules when lobbying for Greensill. Cameron started working

for Greensill in 2018, but stood down as prime minister in 2016. Even if he had broken the rules, they aren't enforceable anyway.

The Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (Acoba) “advises” officials and ministers on whether roles they take after leaving government comply with the rules.

But it can't stop them from taking the jobs anyway.

A huge number of officials and government advisers aren't even covered by the existing codes, including temporary civil servants.



Lobbying helps keep deals secret

Out of 34,000 people who left the civil service in 2020, only 108 sought advice from Acoba about their subsequent employment.

In 2018 an MPs' select committee called Acoba a “toothless regulator” and recommended it have more powers. This wasn't to stop corruption, but to stop “an even greater decline in public trust in our democracy”.

The government rejected its calls. Cameron's government set up a statutory lobbying register in 2014. But most lobbyists don't have to be on it.

Bill Crothers

Bill Crothers took a job at Greensill while he was chief procurement officer for the government. The Cabinet Office approved the arrangement in late 2015.

Lord Hogan-Howe

Lord Hogan-Howe, ex-Met Police commissioner, was a consultant for a Greensill subsidiary while being a non-executive director of the Cabinet Office.

John Penrose

The “anti-corruption tsar” John Penrose said the Greensill scandal puts the “future of our democracy” at stake.

The Tory MP is married to Dido Harding, who the government appointed to head the NHS Test and Trace system.

How ‘supply chain finance’ became gambling for spivs

SUPPLY CHAIN finance makes it easier to mask debt. The money a buyer owes to the intermediary shows up as a “trade payable” or “accounts payable”.

It doesn't have to be disclosed. So companies can make their finances look stronger than they are.

They can also do this by calculating future profits based on estimates of the future values of goods and services.

But these are at the mercy of the market. Short-selling and other dodgy dealings can send the value of a commodity soaring, or bring it crashing down in a few hours.

Because Greensill wanted to increase profits, it also offered “future accounts receivables finance”. This means lending money to a company before it has sold something, on the promise of future payments once it does.

So Greensill lent money backed

up by transactions that had never happened and might never happen.

The long term problem of declining profitability in capitalism repeatedly pushes bosses to look for easy ways to make money.

Unstable

Speculative bubbles, and selling and speculating on debt are examples of these. They are inherently unstable and unsustainable.

But bosses hope to make short term profit then pass the risks on to someone else.

And the rich know that, whenever they are really in trouble, nation states will bail them out.

Greensill hasn't exposed a strange, side issue with capitalism. It has shown how capitalism works.

Corruption is built into the system and the state's job is to make sure the system runs in the interests of profit.

...and Greensill Capital collapsed like a pack of cards

GREENSILL CAPITAL collapsed after the companies that insured its lending refused to extend policies—and the firm could find no other insurer to take it over. Less than two years before it had been valued at £2.5 billion.

It was owed £3.3 billion by businesses and had 16 offices around the world when it filed for bankruptcy.

Its lawyers had argued in court that insurers should be instructed to extend the policies, otherwise 50,000 jobs would be at risk. The judge refused.

Tokio Marine Management, the parent firm of Greensill's insurance provider, said last July that it would no longer extend two policies.

Greensill couldn't find another

insurer. Panicked, Credit Suisse froze the Greensill funds, worth over £7 billion at the time.

Problems were clear years before.

In 2018 GAM, the asset management firm that Greensill sold funds through, suspended Tim Haywood, one of its top fund managers.

An internal investigation had raised questions about investments Haywood had made in firms linked to Sanjeev Gupta.

Lex Greensill was the middleman in the deals. In 2019, an audit in Germany found that Greensill Bank was overly exposed to Gupta's firms. But despite the warning signs, Britain's politicians loved up to Greensill.

The aftermath—and those that got away with the loot

CREDIT SUISSE estimates that around £1.7 billion remains “at risk” in funds that are tied to Greensill.

It's thought that many firms that Greensill lent to are unable to repay their debts.

It said billionaire investment tycoon Sanjeev Gupta's GFG Alliance was “driving the valuation uncertainty in the funds”. GFG firms owe the funds nearly £1 billion.

Gupta restructured his business last year to grab more cash from the Tories' coronavirus lending scheme—with Greensill Capital's help.

Firms linked to Gupta grabbed hundreds of millions of pounds in loans via Greensill, which used the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBIL).

Greensill was only authorised to lend £50 million to a single firm under the scheme rules. But GFG

is a loose collection of different businesses.

Gupta split it up further last year purely to grab more money from the loan programme.

A document outlining the changes last year was entitled “CLBIL Restructuring”.

Worldwide

GFG Alliance owns Liberty Steel, which employs around 3,000 workers in Britain.

GFG employs around 35,000 workers worldwide. One vulnerable plant in France is Alvalde Aluminium Poitou. It got a state-backed loan from Greensill Bank last December—but two days later the money was withdrawn.

Union member Jean-Philippe Juin said, “Mr Gupta presented himself to us as a saviour, with hopeful words and many promises.

“In the end, he turned out to be an empty shell.”

What Greensill Capital did

BANKS HAVE lent money to firms for centuries. But Lex Greensill said Greensill Capital offered a form of “technological disruption” that aimed at “democratising capital”.

Greensill Capital offered “reverse factoring” or “supply chain finance”. It would pay an invoice on behalf of a buyer—after taking a fee—and allow the buyer more time to pay the bill.

Greensill's deals offered much longer repayment terms. He took the debts he owned and turned them into financial products that investors could buy.

Investments in these “funds” were sold through Credit Suisse and GAM, a

Swiss asset management firm.

Big global investors put in hundreds of millions of pounds. In 2019 Lex Greensill became a billionaire after SoftBank's Vision Fund invested £1.1 billion in Greensill Capital.

Greensill Capital also bought a bank in Germany and became a commercial lender. The business generated cash that Greensill could then lend on. Vast amounts went to billionaire tycoon Sanjeev Gupta.

This way of operating spread Greensill's risk around. So when things went wrong, more of the system was exposed.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism.

In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We oppose discrimination against disabled people including those who experience mental distress.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602

Socialist Workers Party online meetings



REPUBLICAN FIGHTERS in 1921

100 years since Partition—can there be a united Ireland?

CARDIFF
Wed 28 Apr, 7.30pm
630-181-4857

DORSET
Thu 29 Apr, 7.30pm
706-382-3359

KENT
Thu 29 Apr, 8.15pm
434-623-8064

BIRMINGHAM
Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights

Wed 28 Apr, 7pm
281-634-5938

BLACK COUNTRY, SHROPSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE

Booklaunch: *Rebellious Daughters of History* with author Judy Cox

Wed 28 Apr, 7.30pm
352 891 2411

BRADFORD

Booklaunch: *Rebellious Daughters of History* with author Judy Cox

Thu 29 Apr, 7pm
885 9187 7552

BRIGHTON AND HOVE
Capitalism & economic crisis—how can we make the rich pay?

Thu 29 Apr, 6.30pm
841 2142 3683

BRISTOL

After the Sewell report—how do we beat institutional racism?

Thu 29 Apr, 7.30pm
688-397-748

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Riots and resistance—police, violence and the state

Wed 28 Apr, 7.30pm
446 409 5118

CAMBRIDGE
Can capitalism ever be sustainable?

Thu 29 Apr, 7.30pm
681-800-4408

CHESTERFIELD

Starmer, one year on—should we vote Labour?

Thu 29 Apr, 6.30pm
829-532-877

COLCHESTER

Riots and resistance—police, violence and the state

Thu 6 May, 7.30pm
466-478-2013

COVENTRY

Blair to Starmer—why won't Labour oppose the Tories?

Wed 28 Apr, 7.30pm
823-945-1917

DEVON AND CORNWALL

Indian workers and farmers—mass revolt against Modi

Thu 29 Apr, 7.30pm
865-2972-2883

DUNDEE, ABERDEEN & PERTH

Booklaunch: *Breaking up the British state—Scotland, Independence and Socialism*

Wed 28 Apr, 7.30pm
894 2628 7708

EAST MIDLANDS
Can capitalism ever be sustainable?

Wed 28 Apr, 7pm
354-874-4790

EDINBURGH

Booklaunch: *Breaking up the British state—Scotland, Independence and Socialism*

Wed 28 Apr, 7.30pm
431-459-112

GLASGOW

Booklaunch: *Breaking up the British state—Scotland, Independence and Socialism*

Thu 29 Apr, 7pm
879 2402 3259

HARLOW

Free speech, the Tories and defending our rights

Thu 6 May, 7.30pm
832-8746-7480

HOME COUNTIES

The Black Panthers and the fight against racism

Thu 29 Apr, 6.30pm
872 4922 1957

HUDDERSFIELD

Marxism and religion

Wed 28 Apr, 6.30pm
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New novel shows the truth of the Egyptian Revolution

The Republic of False Truths by Alaa Al Aswany brings the story of the revolution to life through the eyes of those who lived it, writes **Nick Clark**

THIS NOVEL is banned in Egypt. The story it tells, of revolution and repression, is still raw ten years on from the real-life events that transform each of its many characters' lives.

You can read many analyses of the Egyptian Revolution. Best-selling novelist Alaa Al Aswany's book *The Republic of False Truths* makes it real.

The events of the revolution unfold almost in a fragmented way, as the narrative flits between an array of characters.

There's the worker activist trying to build demonstrations against the regime, as well as strikes in his cement factory, trying to somehow tie the two together.

There's the teacher trying to defy the unspoken corruption that demands she offers extra classes to children from wealthier backgrounds, and ignores those who can't afford them.

There's also the general—the devout Muslim who twists his religion into something that can justify torture. And there's his daughter, also religious, struggling to believe him.

They're all meant to represent the span of Egyptian society—but they're not crude stand-ins or caricatures. Aswany gives a depth to each of them that makes them—and their flaws and hypocrisies—believable.

In the case of the general, this isn't about humanising or sympathising with the regime.

Thinks

It's about exposing how the regime thinks and operates.

In the same way, Aswany uses the characters' stories to demonstrate what poverty and corruption in Egypt actually look like for the people who suffer them.

And they show—rather than tell—the dynamics between the different forces that come together in a revolution.

Through the characters, we can see how the motivations of the middle classes who feel held back by regime corruption are different from the workers who just can't bear poverty any longer.

Or how the activist—who for so long strives to convince workers to join the struggle against the regime—suddenly has to catch up with their demands as they take to the streets.

It's an insight into revolution from someone who was actually involved—and which brings history and theory to life.

The Republic of False Truths is out now. Published by Faber, £16.99



TOOLS OF the trade—Gillian Wallace Horvat stars as Gillian Wallace Horvat

How to make a killing in a sexist industry

FILM

I BLAME SOCIETY

Available now on digital platforms

I BLAME SOCIETY is a mockumentary about film industry sexism with a dose of serial murder dropped in.

The story follows a struggling director, Gillian Wallace Horvat—played by the film's actual director Gillian Wallace Horvat—as she tries to push the limits and make a film she can be proud of.

Prompted by two friends telling her that she would make a "great murderer" she begins a project about how to commit the perfect killing. But instead of using actors, Gillian begins to murder real people.

Behind the bloodshed the

film brilliantly examines the experiences of women either working in the film industry or attempting to break into it.

Gillian's boyfriend comes home complaining about having to take orders from a female director who apparently asks the opinion of the crew too much.

And in another scene a male screenwriting duo asks Gillian to put her name to a project to increase its diversity while being completely uninterested in her ideas or writing.

Happily most woman filmmakers aren't pushed to commit serial murder because of industry sexism. But this film shows just how full of rage many women will be because of it.

It also subverts some interesting assumptions

about women's role in society, especially in the arts and culture.

Men are often the ones who are described as suffering or pushing the limits for art.

So it is interesting to see a portrayal of a woman who pushes even farther than any of them.

The concept of this film is incredibly impressive and ambitious, and the plot is intricate and unpredictable. But unfortunately it suffers at times from feeling unpolished which can be distracting.

But it's clear the film is trying to say that we live in a sexist system that pushes people to extreme lengths in search of success. And for that I blame society.

Sophie Squire

PLAY

SAFE

Free to watch online at hackneyempire.co.uk

SAFE—A new digital theatre production—tells the real stories of four young LGBT+ people facing homelessness or living in difficult circumstances.

In Britain 25 percent of homeless or at risk people are LGBT+.

So it was important that their stories were told in the words of the people themselves, by an LGBT+ cast.

The characters share coming out stories, and the early years of confusion and non-acceptance by family members who physically and verbally abused them.

This led to some ending up in care, and others without a stable home during their teen years. This also damaged their education, and mental and physical health.

Safe presents each character powerfully,



PICTURE: JANE HOBSON

Characters share painful stories

especially the trans man and woman who begin by trying to work out their sexuality and eventually discover their gender identities.

It shows the battles and barriers trans people face, from self-medicating to feeling invisible.

Each character experiences rejection and loneliness, with some turning to drugs and alcohol as a result.

Due to not being accepted at home, the characters are moved around to different houses by multiple charities or associations.

The reality is that at 23 one character was forced into prostitution after their benefits stopped.

Another had nowhere to sleep for the weekend but was told that because they were over 18 they had to "just stick it out".

The theme throughout is survival.

Safe grapples with addiction, suicide, identity, religion and race as the characters look for what is safe—"security, acceptance, freedom and equality".

Isabel Ringrose

IN THE same week that Joe Biden announced the withdrawal of soldiers from Afghanistan, he proposed raising military spending to £546 billion.

It comes as Russia put thousands of troops on the border with Ukraine.

The US president said it was time to “end America’s longest war”. But the era of the US throwing its military weight around the world isn’t over—and neither is the risk of more wars.

Biden isn’t even promising to leave Afghanistan alone.

He is discussing repositioning forces, possibly to neighbouring Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, to keep Afghanistan in a state of siege.

The US will also still pay the salaries of all Afghan security forces.

And Biden said the US will “keep providing assistance to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Along with our partners, we are training and equipping nearly 300,000 personnel.”

“Providing assistance” usually means keeping some soldiers in the country as “trainers” or “advisers”.

Yet there’s no doubt that the move represents a landmark defeat for the US’s attempts to force its will on the world through force and violence.

When the US invaded Afghanistan it said its aim was to root out Osama Bin Laden and the al-Qaida group.

In reality, it was all about reasserting US dominance, especially in Asia and the nearby Middle East.

That was in 2001. In 2021, the Taliban resistance group boasts, “We have won the war and America has lost.” Meanwhile, Biden tacitly admits defeat.

DESPITE almost 20 years of inflicting death and misery on Afghan people—and sending some 800,000 soldiers in total—the US is not in control.

“We cannot continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan hoping to create the ideal conditions for our withdrawal, expecting a different result, said Biden.

He could say almost the exact same thing about the US’s wars in Iraq, where he also apparently plans to withdraw soldiers.

Biden and the Iraqi government agreed earlier this month that the US would remove all “combat forces” from the country.

Again, some soldiers will stay in “training and advisory roles” and there’s no timetable for pulling out.

But it’s not happening all on the US’s terms.

RUSSIAN TROOPS are apparently massing on the Ukraine border. Their moves, and the US response, threaten more war

WAR AND A DEADLY SYSTEM

US president Joe Biden plans to keep using force to promote US imperialism, despite Middle East defeats. Nick Clark says it’s the way capitalism works that creates constant conflicts

Warmonger Joe Biden

The Iraqi parliament demanded the US withdraw its troops last year, after the US assassinated visiting Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in an airstrike on Baghdad airport.

Bases housing US soldiers come under occasional rocket attacks, allegedly from pro-Iranian militias.

And when—or if—the US does pull out, it will leave its rival Iran with more power in Iraq.

A collection of mostly



Despite almost 20 years of inflicting death and misery on people, the US is not in control

Iranian-backed militias—the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)—is now effectively a branch of Iraq’s military.

Iran backs politicians in the second largest group in Iraq’s parliament, the Fateh alliance.

And Iraq is now a big market for Iranian exports—including so much gas that Iran can threaten Iraq with power blackouts.

This points to the feature of capitalism that causes wars in the first place—imperialism.

Rival states compete for control of markets, resources and territory so that businesses and multinationals tied to their economies can keep growing and profiting.

This growth in pursuit of profit is constant—which means states constantly compete to divide and redivide the world between each other.

It’s all backed up with military force—and when one state’s growth threatens another’s interests, it can mean war.

This competition can happen between major powers on a global scale, but also regionally.

Iran took advantage of the US’s decline to gain much more power over Iraq’s politics and economy.

It also stretched into Syria by joining the civil war on behalf of dictator Bashar al-Assad.

Its forces in Syria are now regularly bombed from across the border by Israel, which sees them as a threat.

Iran is also in direct, dangerous and deadly competition with US ally Saudi Arabia, which has its own interest in being a dominant regional power.

SAUDI ARABIA has always been kept subordinate in its partnership with the US. But over the past decade—as the US declined in the Middle East—it’s acted more freely as a military power in its own interests.

The most horrific example of this is the prolonged war it has waged against the Iranian-backed Houthi movement in Yemen.

Previous US president Donald Trump hoped to use Saudi Arabia and Israel to push back Iran by force.

He forced harsh economic sanctions on Iran and repeatedly threatened war. At the same time, he promoted closer cooperation between Israel and Arab states to isolate and confront Iran.

Biden wants to keep more of a lid on it. He’s talking up a return to a 2015 deal between the US and Iran that would end sanctions—but under conditions that assert the US’s dominance.

He’s also stuck with parts of Trump’s plan to unite the US’s allies and lean on them to intimidate Iran.

Last week Biden approved Trump’s decision to sell advanced fighter jets and drones to the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

These were previously only sold to Israel. But a deal between Israel and the UAE—championed by Trump—made the sale possible.

Israel has already been launching surprise missile attacks against Iranian ships, and is apparently behind a cyber attack on an Iranian nuclear facility.

This is exactly why the US has plied Israel with billions of

pounds worth of military aid for decades—to act on its behalf in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, it can concentrate its own military against other rivals.

Biden's plan for increasing military spending calls China the US's "top challenge".

That's because China's economic influence is growing worldwide, in competition with the US. Its share of global GDP—the market value of all goods and services produced in the world—is higher than the US's.

N A challenge to the US, it has scoured the world for markets to sell its products and build its industry, particularly across Africa.

Its "belt and road" plan aims to build a vast network of transport infrastructure across the world to facilitate its trade.

And it is building up its military power to bolster this.

The US has tried to stop China's growth by encircling the South China Sea with its allies and navy bases.

This is one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, and its main link with the rest of the world.

The US wants to stop China taking complete military control. But over several years, China has built up its naval forces there.

This includes building entire new islands for navy bases, which it also uses to claim ownership of more territory surrounding them.

Now China is moving its military forces closer to the island of Taiwan, which it claims as its own but which the US backs as independent.

Occupying Taiwan would give it much greater control over the South China Sea—but could also mean confrontation with the US.

At the same time, the US faces a similar challenge with Russia over who controls eastern Ukraine.

Russia is still the major power in eastern Europe, which it has held on to by keeping smaller states on its borders under its influence.

These are also a "buffer" against the US and the European Union (EU).

But attempts by Ukraine to enter the EU and the US-dominated Nato military alliance threaten this.

Russia invaded Crimea, in Ukraine, in 2014 after a protest

A funeral in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 2019 following a US attack (top) The millions who marched in 2003 against war in Iraq (above) were proved right—many bloody deaths later

movement installed a right wing government that wanted to break from Russia and move closer to the West.

It also backed forces in eastern Ukraine that wanted to break away in response.

Now Russia is apparently building up its military forces on the border with Ukraine, with some Ukrainian politicians saying they fear an invasion.

This is also a military challenge to the US. Biden has said Ukraine has the US's "unwavering support".

The example shows that, just because the US's power is declining, there's no less threat of war.

In fact, new regional and global competitions are fuelling war and violence everywhere—from the Middle East, to eastern Europe and the South China Sea.



FOCUS ON IRELAND

The partition of Ireland —fighting the empire

Simon Basketter looks at why Britain split Ireland up during its battle for independence

IRELAND WAS Britain's oldest colony—and some of it still is.

Britain prevented the economic development of much of Ireland. The country's wealth was sucked straight into Britain and run on the basis of divide and rule.

From the 1870s onwards the Tories played on support for the union with Ireland, and for queen and empire, to build a popular base.

Lord Randolph Churchill summed up the tactics with his call to "play the Orange card". Protestant landowners had set up the Orange Order in 1795 to crush resistance. The Order described itself as "a barrier to revolution and an obstacle to compromise".

In 1912 the imperialists, landlords and capitalists played the Orange card against moves for Irish Home Rule.

Campaign

Edward Carson—the lawyer who persecuted Oscar Wilde—and the Tories started a furious campaign that lasted until the First World War.

Tory leader Bonar Law said, "I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I would not be prepared to support them."

Politicians' words soon turned into guns as Carson's Ulster Volunteers were armed in huge numbers to violently fight against Home Rule. It was a sectarian private army with 100,000 members.

Carson had two arguments for partition. One was to let Britain hang on to the profitable industries in the Protestant majority areas in the north east.

Britain had key economic and military interests in Northern Ireland.

Between 1870 and 1910 the labour force in shipbuilding grew five times and had a major engineering industry around it.

Carson's second argument was on "the



IRA TROOPS during the Irish War of Independence

labour problem". The period saw a huge outbreak of workers' resistance in Britain and Ireland.

He argued that in the areas of Ireland where Protestants felt themselves to be in ascendance against Catholics, labour agitation was quieter.

Four counties—Derry, Armagh, Down and Antrim—had big Protestant majorities. But they were too small to form a separate state.

Carson suggested adding the predominantly Catholic counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone to the "safe" Protestant ones.

Against this arbitrary sectarian imperialism, the Irish Marxist James Connolly wrote, "Such a scheme, the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster, would mean a carnival of reaction North and South."

While some nationalists supported the First World War, Connolly was a leader during the Easter Rising of 1916. It was crushed and Connolly shot—but repression didn't work.

Mass strikes and demonstrations erupted when Britain raised the threat of conscription in 1918. In January 1919 Sinn

Fein MPs set up their own illegal parliament in Dublin.

As the war of independence got under way, the British army was suppressing a strike for a 44-hour week involving more than 40,000 mainly Protestant workers in Belfast.

In rural areas small farmers and labourers began to take over land. Mass support for the IRA meant that by 1920 a guerrilla war was stretching British control in Ireland to breaking point.

Workers

In May 1920, dock and railway workers refused to handle army supplies being imported to Ireland.

The British government responded with increased murderous repression.

In the North, Unionist leaders declared war on Catholics. The shipyards were cleared of all Catholic workers and "rotten Prods"—socialists. Hundreds of Catholic families were burned out of their homes.

By 1921 the British were forced to concede that Ireland was ungovernable and entered into negotiations.

After the Nationalists agreed to partition, some 30,000 IRA volunteers vowed to continue the struggle. A civil war between pro and anti-treaty forces lasted for two more years.

The border was entrenched and Northern Ireland was created as a society defined by discrimination. The empire was on its way out, but Connolly's predicted carnival of reaction had arrived.

This is the first in a series of articles on the partition of Ireland. Read our coverage at bit.ly/SWPartition100

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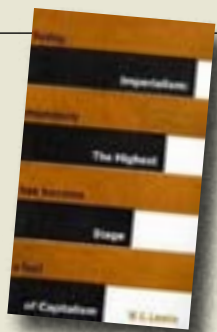
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State statisticians lose a whole year's strike days

by CHARLIE KIMBER

HOW MANY workers went on strike in 2020? One good answer might be “not enough”.

But the official answer is “we will never know”.

At the start of the pandemic the Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced it was shutting down the collection of most of its labour market statistics so that it could do more about Covid-19.

Disgracefully it added that these statistics would be released later for every area of work except one—strikes.

Confidence

We shouldn't have too much confidence in the ONS figures anyway.

Its method? “Disputes are picked up from reports in the mainstream media and websites such as The Morning Star and the Socialist Worker, as well as news feed websites. Union websites are also a primary source of information.”

But of course the ONS doesn't accept Socialist Worker's account. Instead it asks bosses how many they



STRIKING COUNCIL workers on the picket lines in Tower Hamlets last year

thought struck. And it offers them confidentiality—figures for individual disputes are not named, only the sector as a whole.

Very small strikes and, importantly, unofficial strikes are excluded.

We know it's not precise. Dave Lyddon from Keele university, who has studied

this area, told Socialist Worker, “In 2018 the ONS figures showed 81 strikes in progress during the year. But the figures submitted by unions to the Certification Officer recorded 180 strikes. There certainly does seem to be a serious underestimate.”

Let's look at 2020 and 2021 through the eyes of

Socialist Worker. In its pages there are reports of some 48 official strikes or series of strikes during 2020. The year began with battles continuing at South Western Railways and Westex carpets. Then in February tens of thousands of university workers held 14 days of strikes.

The emergence of the

pandemic had a chilling effect. But there were very important unofficial walkouts in libraries, refuse depots, distribution centres, food plants, Royal Mail sites and other workplaces.

By the summer official strikes were back. Tower Hamlets council, Bootle HMRC and Tate galleries all saw long strikes. In the autumn there were bitter battles at Optare and We Are With You.

Then came major strikes at Rolls-Royce, Heartlands hospital, BA Cargo and Alstom.

Estimate

Using union figures for 2020, an estimate of strike days—the number of strikers multiplied by the number of days on strike—comes to close to a million.

That would be a transformation. In recent years the ONS has recorded around 275,000-325,000 strike days for the whole year.

A lot of assessing 2020's strike days depends on how you count the university strikes. The UCU union said 50,000 workers struck. If that happened for 14 days it would

be 700,000 strike days. The ONS would have come up with a much lower figure.

It would accept managers' description of how many struck, and it would not count part-time workers or workers who teach only a few hours a week as counting for a whole strike day.

Whatever the statistical arguments, this analysis does show that there were still significant battles, despite the pandemic and despite national union leaders' failure to lead real resistance.

And 2021 is seeing a rise in struggle.

It began with very significant unofficial action by school workers that stopped an unsafe return.

The major battles at British Gas, by Scottish further education workers, and on the buses in Manchester in London are signs of the potential for workers to fight.

The task is turning the potential into reality—and making sure strikes win.

Our rulers won't even produce their own version of strike numbers. Socialist Worker will be more important than ever.

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Thousands of British Gas workers let down by union

The fight against bosses' fire and rehire tactics requires a unified struggle argues **Sophie Squires**

FOR British Gas workers a nightmare began in July of last year.

The boss of parent company Centrica, Chris O'Shea, revealed vicious plans to fire and rehire the workforce if they didn't accept detrimental changes to their terms and conditions.

It was an outrageous bosses' assault. But the loss of jobs and working conditions for thousands of workers was not inevitable.

The problem was the lack of effective strategy on the workers' side.

In August workers voted in an indicative ballot—and 95 percent backed strikes. It then took months for the union to hold a formal ballot—losing the chance for a swift reaction.

In December, 89 percent of workers voted to strike.

Around 7,000 workers began strikes on 7 January—six months after the threat was first made.

There has been no trouble with the workers' readiness to fight. They have solidly taken part in 43 days of strikes.

But at many vital points, the national leadership from the GMB was lacking.

In an early mistake, the union called off four days of strikes for negotiations—on the coldest and the busiest weekend of the year when British Gas was vulnerable.

The negotiations, facilitated by conciliation service Acas, resulted in the strikers being offered a contract that was described simply as a



BRITISH GAS workers have struck for 43 days against 'fire and rehire'

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

"rehash of the old one"

But the GMB leadership then sent an email to strikers saying, "If you plan to stay with British Gas after 31 March and intend to ultimately sign a new contract, our lawyers' advice is to do so by noon on 25 March if you want to avoid the loss of protected terms and changes you have fought for."

It was a demoralising blow, leading to divisions and a loss of momentum. Yet despite this around

1,000 workers refused to sign the renewed contract. Bosses gave them until 14 April to decide whether to surrender or leave the company.

Shockingly the GMB issued no statements regarding the workers who were sacked until 14 April itself. Many members felt abandoned by their union.

There was an alternative.

The GMB should have moved early to an all-out strike. Instead of just a backlog of repairs, bosses would have

had a crisis on their hands.

Other unions with members in different sections at British Gas should have come out in solidarity with the engineers.

Instead there are allegations that they did deals with management to advance their own standing at the company.

The TUC union federation could have called for protests and walkouts. It could have launched a national financial appeal to support

an all out strike. British Gas was a chance to draw a line in the sand, to say the union movement was not going to accept fire and rehire.

Instead bosses have wrecked workers' lives.

The courage and determination of the strikers has been betrayed.

What's your story?
Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

'If we'd gone on all-out strike, we could have made some progress'

"RIGHT up until 14 April I was in turmoil over whether I should sign or leave British Gas," Scottish Gas worker Simon told Socialist Worker.

"But then it became clear, I couldn't continue to work for a company that has put us through this."

"It was weird not seeing my blue van outside my house. It's something I've seen for so many years."

Simon is one of the hundreds of workers sacked by British and Scottish Gas after refusing to sign up for a 15 percent pay cut and worse conditions.

He is a second generation Scottish Gas worker. He



and his father have worked more than 50 years at the company between them.

For Simon and many others the belief that a job at British Gas was a "job for life" has ended.

Throughout the strikes, Simon said there was no shortage of solidarity from the public.

Hundreds of customers have said they will cancel their contracts with the company after seeing how they treat workers.

Simon added solidarity was expressed by colleagues.

"The office workers at British Gas, who are mainly women, have joined us on picket lines and brought us food every single day we've had them," he said.

"They were forced to sign up to new contracts much earlier than us. I've been so impressed and inspired by their support throughout."

Simon said that although he can "hold his head up high" after striking for over 40 days there were some vital missteps that were made in the dispute.

"The pattern of our strike days became too predictable. It became easy for management to work around them," he said.

"If we'd gone on all out strike or just changed the strike days up to be less predictable we could have made some progress."

Simon acknowledged the importance of picket lines organised by workers. "I attended a lot of pickets and I would try and persuade other workers to stand on them also," he said.

He also stressed the need for more walkouts and action.

"Covid was a big problem," he said. "Without it, we could have had massive marches through cities. It would have been really hard to ignore."

Despite suffering such a horrific defeat Simon believes that the workers' fight has hurt bosses.

"The fact is British Gas has lost a lot of respect from the public," he said. "They've also lost hundreds of some of their most highly skilled workers."

Simon and all the other strikers should be proud of the role they have played.

They richly deserved a much better outcome.

Protests highlight the scandal of empty housing

by ISABEL RINGROSE

HOUSING CAMPAIGNERS took part in a day of action over empty homes last Saturday.

Campaign groups Action on Empty Homes and Homes for All staged protests outside new developments with no social housing, cleared council homes and long-term empty properties.

There were protests in Southwark, Newham, Islington and Haringey in London, as well as Milton Keynes and Harlow.

The day included a live stream of the protests and talks from activists in the Unite union, Streets Kitchen, Disabled People Against Cuts and Shelter.

Miriam Scharf from east London People Before Profit said, "This action is necessary in Newham. There are 30,000 on the council waiting list.

"Yet the Hallsville Quarter with 47 so-called 'affordable homes' out of 670 units shows a callous disregard for Newham residents.

"Meanwhile private developers continue to build massive blocks like those at Brunel Street Works."

Prison

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn attended a protest at the Pentonville Prison site in Islington where properties are being sold by the Ministry of Justice to private developers.

Tyrone from Shelter explained to the rally that the number of homeless people living in temporary accommodation has increased by 83 percent in the last ten years.

Yet, he added, "Social homes have been sold off much faster than they've been built. This makes the need to repurpose empty homes even more desperate."

In 2020 there were 268,178 long-term empty homes and 262,782 second-homes without any permanent residents and around 120,000 Airbnb type short-lets.

Will McMahon, the director of Action on Empty Homes, told Socialist Worker, "There is a huge amount of overcrowding. Poor

BACK STORY

Houses are being built—but they are not going to those who desperately need them

● Last year 976 homeless people died—a third more than in 2019. This was despite government claims that it was offering accommodation to all during Covid-19

● Data from 2019-20 also shows that some 830,000 households in England were dangerously overcrowded

accommodation impacts health, education and employment."

He said that the crux of the problem is "corporate and wealth investment in metropolitan areas".

"Houses and flat prices are going up but they're totally unaffordable for people," he said. "Houses are not being built for people to live in.

"Developers don't have to have anyone living in them, they can just sit and watch the value go up."

Will argued the housing market isn't broken, but "working for people with loads of money as it's meant to."

"Build council housing houses for working class people must have affordable rent prices."

Pressure

Sam Burgum, a researcher into requisitioning and squatters' movements, added, "It's pressure from below that opens up empty buildings.

"Local authorities have no problem using their requisitioning powers when kicking out social housing tenants, but are hesitant when talking about unused properties.

"Highlighting empty buildings puts pressure on owners—and squatting helps put it into use."

Will added, "This has to be a national campaign."

Activists are now planning for a similar day of action in October.

Watch the online rally at bit.ly/EmptyHomesRally



PROTESTERS IN Southwark on the day of action

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

EDUCATION

University workers and students say scrapping courses is 'kick in the teeth'

LONDON SOUTH Bank University (LSBU) has announced the wholesale closure of a series of courses with immediate effect.

No students will be recruited to the courses from September this year.

They are BA History, BA Human Geography, MSc in Refugee Studies, MSc Development Studies, MSc Education for Sustainability.

Historian Sami teaches a Black British History module at LSBU. He said the announcement is a "kick in the teeth".

"It just shows how little they value you," Sami told Socialist Worker. "They talk about decolonising education, diversifying and being anti-racist, and it's all bullshit.

The UCU union branch at LSBU is holding an emergency meeting this week over the attack.

Sami said bosses made the decision to slash courses without consulting anyone.

"Closing down degrees at this time of year is really sinister as there are only a few weeks of term left." Workers are now left with

uncertainty about their future, as it isn't clear how many staff will be affected. Sami feels particularly vulnerable.

"I've only been at LSBU since September," he said. "It's the first successful job interview I've had as an academic. I was planning to start a new life in London.

But my contract ends in December, and I can't see how I'm going to be at LSBU after that."

Sami added that workers were told they would have time to develop the course.

Lied

"It feels like we've been lied to," he said. And the news comes after a "difficult year" teaching during the pandemic.

"We get no extra time to do the extra marking. Workload has gone through the roof. We worked so hard on modules during lockdown, and this is how we are treated."

LSBU isn't the only university facing vicious cuts to courses. Bosses at Birmingham's Aston University plan to close the Department of History, Languages

and Translation to new students from next year. This would scrap over 12 courses including BScs in history and politics, and international business and modern languages. UCU members there have voted unanimously to resist the cuts.

Nearly 2,500 people have signed a petition against the cuts at Aston. And solidarity with workers and students at LSBU has poured in since the cuts were announced.

Attacks will grow as bosses and the Tories use the pandemic to wage an assault on education, students and workers' rights. There must be resistance.

Sami fears the attack at LSBU is "only the beginning" of attempts to reshape universities. And he said the courses targeted show the attack is "part of the Tory agenda to crush humanities".

"It kind of excludes marginalised students, ethnic minority students, working class students," he said. "It's an attempt to dismantle critical education degrees. It's brutal."

Sadie Robinson

COUNCIL WORKERS

Back crucial battle in Thurrock council

by ISABEL RINGROSE

COUNCIL WORKERS in Thurrock, Essex, launched 18 days of strikes on Tuesday of last week against bosses' plans to "brutally cut their pay and conditions".

The Tory-run council wants to slash highway maintenance, refuse and street cleaning workers' pay.

Around 100 Unite union members took to the picket lines on Tuesday of last week.

One striker said, "We're happy to be standing up for ourselves."

"We're fighting against cuts that will leave us worse off every month and nobody here is really willing to back down."

Demands

Strikers used a sound system to make it loud and clear that they're not going anywhere until their demands are met.

The lively picket line had support from lorries hooting their horns in solidarity.

Workers used whistles, horns and flags to make the picket as vibrant as possible.

Bin collections were carried out up until 9am,



DETERMINED TO win in Thurrock

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

meaning only half of the regular collections are taking place.

Bosses also want to cut payments for working unsocial hours, overtime, night shifts and bank holidays.

Unite union regional officer Michelle Cook said the union "will not accept these proposals to slash the pay of these council heroes".

"They have provided

essential services to the residents of Thurrock throughout this pandemic," she said.

"The council appears to be prepared to disrupt its residents' key services and attack its employees' conditions."

Some 90 percent of workers voted for strikes with a huge turnout of around 70 percent—and this result clearly bolstered confidence. Every trade

unionist should get behind the Thurrock council workers' fight.

●Donations to the strike fund to Unite 1/1152, sort code 60-83-01, account number 20216557. Messages of solidarity to willie.howard@uniteunion.org Follow Justice For Refuse Workers & Cleaners on Facebook. Sign the petition bit.ly/ThurrockSupport

SCOTTISH LECTURERS

FE lecturers to escalate

SCOTTISH College lecturers in the EIS-Fela union are stepping up their national dispute this week. They were set to strike on Tuesday and Wednesday this week.

The replacement of lecturers, using tactics such as fire and rehire, is facing opposition because it sells working class students short in their education.

People without the necessary terms and conditions—such as preparation and marking time—cannot provide an adequate service.

A ballot on action short of strike action (ASOS) has just been launched.

This is in addition to two days' striking escalating to three days in the following weeks.

The aim is to put additional pressure on the employers to ratify the deal which they themselves proposed but then walked away from.

The Scottish government is claiming that it wants to see the dispute resolved.

But a check on the pronouncements by the FE and HE minister shows that key sections have been plagiarised from the employers' press statements.

Backing them means his action is prolonging the dispute rather than resolving it.

This has allowed the employers to delay talks in the hope of wearing down the EIS-Fela union.

The ASOS ballot shows that the opposite is true.

Solidarity can play an important part in winning this fight.

Donations to the union hardship fund have been coming in from UCU union branches, trades councils and unions such as Unite.

●For details on how to join rallies, make donations and support the action please write to dongluckstein@gmail.com

BUS WORKERS

Strikes to stop bus bosses

LONDON UNITED bus drivers have escalated their fight against bosses' attacks on pay and conditions.

Unite union members at bus garages in Stamford Brook and Hounslow Heath in west London struck on Thursday last week.

They joined workers at five other London United Garages, who have held a series of strikes since 22 February.

Wasiq Ali, a driver at Stamford Brook, told Socialist Worker, "Strikes should carry on until bosses learn the hard way. One-day strikes aren't enough."

Another driver added, "We want to escalate the strike as far as possible—until we win. We need an all-out indefinite strike."

The fight for better conditions has been highlighted by overwhelming

vote for strikes by 4,000 bus drivers at operator Metroline. Unite members oppose plans to introduce a remote sign-on system over fears it's unsafe.

Unite has announced further London United strikes for Friday 23 April, Monday 26 April and Friday 7 May.

Meanwhile, 400 bus drivers at Go North West in Manchester have been on an all-out strike against fire and rehire since 28 February.

Unite activists in Manchester and London delivered messages to each city hall calling mayors Sadiq Khan and Andy Burnham to outlaw fire and rehire.

Unite executive officer Sharon Graham said they're calling on them to "publicly back a declaration which bars employers who use fire and rehire from bidding for future contracts".

TELECOMS

Fight to win at Openreach

HIGHLY SKILLED engineers working for BT Openreach began five days of strikes on Monday this week, in a battle over pay and conditions.

The walkout—the longest round of strikes so far—was an escalation by the CWU union members against bosses who have refused to back down.

The strikers were insulted when bosses offered union officials just 30 minutes of talks ahead of the action.

Graham Colk, the CWU's Openreach regional coordinator for Wales and the Marches, told Socialist Worker, "People felt insulted by the 30 minutes. I guess it's a game of bluff, but 30 minutes is not enough to properly debate anything."

"The members have taken that as their concerns being dismissed."

The 170 strikers—a group of workers known as Repayment Project

Engineers (RPE)—are fighting against new contracts that will change the nature of the job.

Bosses say existing workers will keep their current terms and conditions. But the new grade will remove union recognition—and mean worse pay and conditions for new starters.

One union rep told Socialist Worker that bosses have pushed ahead with plans to recruit workers on the new contracts. He said managers have also been taunting strikers.

But Graham said the strikers can see they're having a major impact.

The strike comes as an even bigger dispute is brewing across BT.

Bosses plan a major "reorganisation" that could mean compulsory redundancies as well as attacks on pay and conditions.

HEALTH WORKERS

A victory at East Lancs

UNISON UNION members at East Lancashire hospitals were celebrating this week as trust bosses announced that security guards are being brought back in house.

The workers, currently employed by multinational giant Engie Services, were set to strike this week.

At issue was the firm's failure to pay NHS rates.

But security staff at the Burnley General and Royal Blackburn hospitals have now been told that their contracts will return to the NHS within six months.

In the meantime, the workers will be paid NHS rates of pay and overtime.

Unison organiser Rebecca Lumberg said, "This is an excellent victory for this group of dedicated hospital workers, who stuck together."

There are many similar battles taking place in the NHS. This victory shows that workers' action can win.

CHARITY WORKERS

Resistance at St Mungo's

MAINTENANCE workers at housing charity St Mungo's were set to begin an indefinite strike from Thursday this week over "appalling treatment" by senior management.

The strike was called after workers' complaints against management were dismissed.

The Unite union says that a workplace representative is being unfairly subjected to disciplinary proceedings due to raising grievances.

St Mungo's workers staged walkouts last year, in part due to what the union says is the charity's "unbalanced and unfair use of disciplinary procedures".

Unite regional officer Steve O'Donnell said, "We believe our reps are being targeted with formal procedures to prevent them from being able to stand up for staff, who are also suffering from management's hostile approach."

ROUND-UP

■WORKERS AT aerospace parts firm SPS Technologies in Leicester have called off strikes after reaching a deal with bosses to end fire and rehire threats.

Plans would have seen the 200 Unite union members losing up to £3,000 a year.

More than 90 percent of strikers voted to accept the deal. It cut the amount they will lose by over half.

But what's gone through is still a substantial attack.

■NEARLY 300 workers at the Jacobs Douwe Egberts site in Banbury, Oxfordshire, are set to start an overtime ban from Saturday 1 May over fire and rehire plans.

This will escalate to strikes in June.

Unite union members

voted 87 percent yes to strike over the decision by the company to fire and rehire its 291 employees.

■WORKERS from the tenant referencing department of London-based Goodlord are on strike over fire and rehire plans.

This will see wages cut by £6,000 and force many out of the city as planned cuts will pull pay below the London Living Wage.

Unite union members have been striking since the end of February but escalated to an indefinite strike at the beginning of March.

●Pickets are scheduled outside Goodlord headquarters in Spitalfields, east London, on Thursday 22 April and Friday 23 April at 11.30am.

FIGHT KILLER COPS AFTER FLOYD TRIAL

by SOPHIE SQUIRE

RAGE AT a racist system and killer cops continued to burn as closing statements were heard on Monday in the trial of Derek Chauvin.

He is the police officer accused of murdering George Floyd in the US last May.

As Socialist Worker went to press, activists were anxiously waiting to hear whether the jury would find Chauvin guilty of second-degree murder.

Second-degree murder is the most serious charge being brought against Chauvin at the trial.

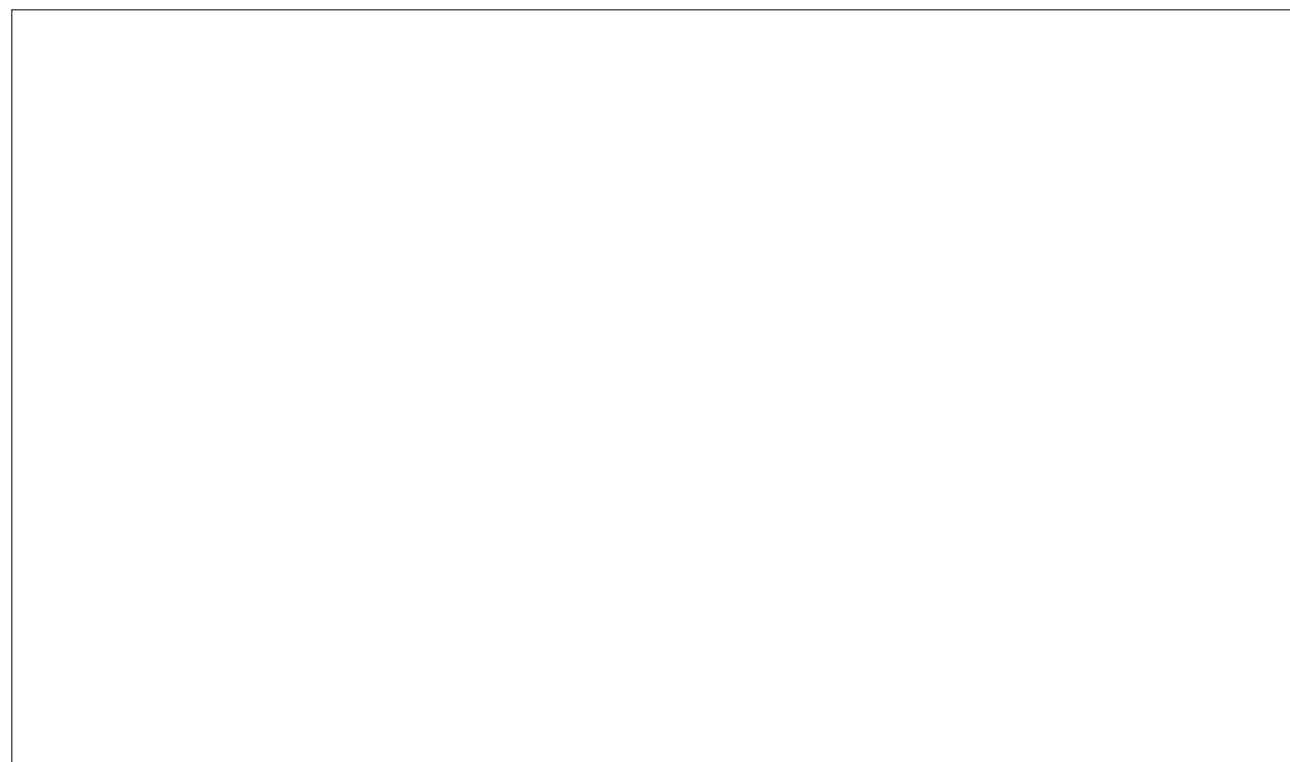
If he is convicted Chauvin could spend up to 40 years in prison.

However, Minnesota state guidelines recommend only 12 years.

Witness testimonies ended last week, with 38 witnesses called by the prosecution and seven by the defence. Chauvin himself decided not to testify.

Darnella Frazier, the onlooker who filmed Floyd's murder, was one of those called as a witness.

Frazier told the trial in tears, "It's been nights I stayed up, apologising and



GEORGE FLOYD'S murder sparked a huge movement over racism

apologising to George Floyd for not doing more, and not physically interacting and not saving his life."

But Frazier also added in reference to Chauvin, "But it's not what I should've done, it's what he should've done."

A number of Minneapolis police officers were also called to testify against Chauvin to say he used an "excessive amount of force". But others were called to his defence.

Barry Brodd, a former

California police officer, was called to vindicate Chauvin's actions that led to Floyd's death.

He testified last Tuesday that Floyd was struggling as Chauvin's knee pinned his neck to the ground—

rather than "resting comfortably".

Brodd also told the court he felt that "Officer Chauvin's interactions with Mr Floyd were following his training, following current practices in policing and were objectively

reasonable." Brodd described most police murders as "accidental deaths".

Chauvin's lawyer, Eric Nelson, has also argued that his actions were simply part of police training.

The world is watching to see the outcome of this trial. Chauvin must be found guilty of Floyd's murder, but activists must continue to fight for more.

The charge of second-degree murder is already a climb down on original demands by Floyd's family members, who rightly pushed for Chauvin to be charged with first-degree murder.

Punished

Anti-racists need to step up pressure against all the killer cops.

Chauvin cannot be presented as just one "bad apple" which, if rooted out, will make the police force less racist.

The Black Lives Matter movement should continue to take to the streets to demand justice for Floyd and all of those who have died at the hands of the cops.

Whatever the outcome of the trial, it must be used to make an argument to abolish the police for good.

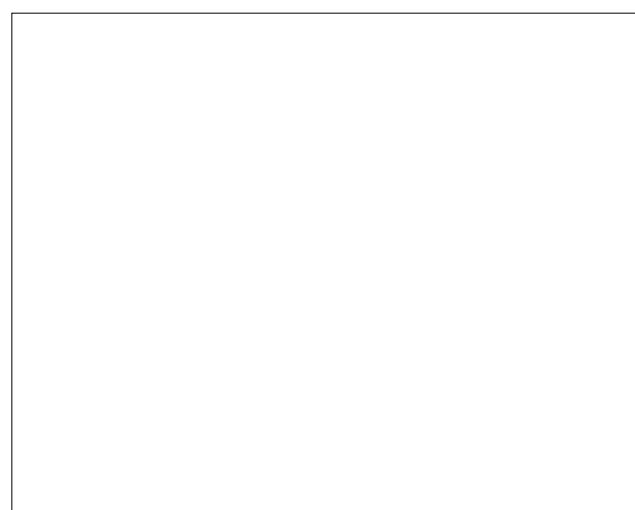
Protesters rage as two more police killings show how little has changed

ANGRY PROTESTS have broken out across the US after footage of 13 year old Adam Toledo being fatally shot by police officer Eric Stillman in Chicago was released last Thursday.

The police and prosecution tried to justify Toledo's killing by saying that he was armed when he was shot.

But the footage shows that he was clearly unarmed at the time and even raised his hands in the air.

Despite this, the head of the Chicago police union, John Catanzara, said that the shooting of Toledo on 29 March was completely



Daunte Wright's family say his death was not accidental

"justified". He went on to say, "There's a very good reason he only shot once."

"Like I said, he could have been shot multiple times but the officer assessed in a split second.

Heroic

"Unfortunately, he already committed to the first shot, justifiably so."

Catanzara also described the officer who killed Toledo as "heroic".

Thousands have marched through the streets of Chicago and rallied outside mayor Lori Lightfoot's home.

Lightfoot had initially supported false claims

that Toledo was armed at the time he was shot.

Activists have also continued to take to the streets to show their rage at the recent police murder of Daunte Wright in Brooklyn Center near Minneapolis last week.

In Minneapolis protests have raged for over a week with the police trying to crush them with tear gas and making dozens of arrests.

The Washington Post newspaper reported that the police's "aggressive tactics have injured dozens of protesters and sent dangerous fumes

and projectiles into the adjacent apartments, leaving residents sick and fearful in what many describe as a war zone".

In New York, protesters blocked traffic to protest against police murders

In Oakland in California activists blocked roads.

Anger was heightened in Portland, Oregon, after the police fatally shot Robert Douglas on Friday. He was said to have been in mental distress at the time.

The police declared protests to be a riot.

Protesters must stay on the streets to fight a rotten racist system.